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FM REO BASRAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0437
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0456

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000137

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/24/2016

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SUBJECT: IRAQI GENERAL HOLDS DIM VIEW OF BASRAH'S NEW SECURITY CHIEF

REF: (A) BASRAH 104; (B) BASRAH 135; (C) BASRAH 117

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CLASSIFIED BY: Andrea Gastaldo, Deputy Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary. Major General Abdul Latif, commander of the Iraqi Army's 10th division responsible for the four southern provinces, told the Regional Coordinator (RC) on August 22 that he has low expectations that the chairman of the newly formed Basrah security committee, Major General Ali Hammadi, will succeed in his mission to pacify the city. Latif stated that Hammadi, who has a reputation for corruption, has no clear plan of action and has asked the IA to carry out functions normally handled by the police force. Latif also discussed the IA's plans to seize unregistered vehicles and weapons and described Iranian efforts to destabilize Basrah. End Summary.

VIEW OF NEW SECURITY COMMITTEE CHIEF

¶2. (C) On August 22, Major General Abdul Latif, the commander of the Iraqi Army's (IA) 10th division in charge of Basrah, Muthanna, Dhi Qar, and Maysaan provinces, told the RC that the chairman of the newly formed Basrah security committee, Major General Ali Hammadi, was a poor choice to lead the security committee responsible for stabilizing Basrah. (See Ref A for more on General Latif.) Latif said that Hammadi, who has a reputation for being corrupt, has no serious plan of action and already had asked for IA assistance with security for police stations, a task normally performed by the police themselves. Latif informed the RC that while he and Hammadi operate in separate chains of command, he is supportive of Hammadi's efforts but would have advised the Prime Minister not to choose Hammadi since he was from Basrah and had a shady past from his time serving in the border forces. Latif added that he is trying to stay out of the current dispute between Hammadi and Basrah Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli, which al-Wa'eli claims he will take to the PM this week (ref B).

¶3. (C) Illustrating Hammadi's helplessness, Latif recounted an anecdote in which Hammadi appealed for IA intervention to support a police station with military force when the station came under threat of attack from militias. Latif responded to Hammadi that with 15,000 policemen in the Basrah force, they should have sufficient personnel to secure their own stations. According to Latif, Hammadi shot back with his usual retort, that "police are corrupt and untrustworthy." (Note. The same response was often given by former Chief of Police Hassan Sewady al-Saad, who left office at the end of July after a long feud with Governor al-Wa'eli and the Basrah Provincial Council (ref

C) End note.)). In Latif's view, honest policemen do exist, but they are cowed into silence and inaction by militia death threats and the lack of good leadership. The general commented that he believed Hammadi should appeal to the public for support and that police officers should be transferred around the provinces to lessen the chance they will become corrupt.

SEIZURE OF UNREGISTERED VEHICLES

14. (C) In a step toward disarming the militias, General Latif revealed that beginning on August 23, his forces would set up traffic checkpoints in Basrah and seize unregistered motorcycles and cars, which he said are used to carry out assassinations and kidnappings. (Note. New military checkpoints were observed in Basrah streets on August 23. End note.) The general added that his IA forces will arrest people carrying weapons without permits, another step in the gargantuan task of attempting to re-establish public order.

POROUS BORDER WITH IRAN NEEDS TO BE SEALED

15. (C) General Latif also discussed Iran's efforts to destabilize Basrah. He said that the Basrah could not become secure until the border with Iran is sealed and the flow of Iranian rockets, guns, snipers, money and agents into Iraq is staunch. The general said that Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and other militias are at the receiving end of Iran's largesse. He commented that Iranian agents are teaching JAM fighters to launch rockets at coalition targets and are paying them money to do so. The general recommended that rewards in the form of promotions and money be given to soldiers who seize Iranian munitions smuggled across the border.

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16. (C) Comment. General Latif, a non-political soldier's soldier, is one of the few points of light in a darkening picture of Basrah's descent into lawlessness. He has proven his effectiveness in various security operations, but the record shows that after his reassignment to other missions, his impact was short-lived. Latif's comments about Hammadi's incompetence are consistent with assessments from nearly all of our contacts.

End Comment.
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